



PRESS STATEMENT

City of South Fulton Government

Department of Communications

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South Fulton Challenges Mayor's Assertions Made During Whistleblower Press Conference

(CITY OF SOUTH FULTON, GA – July 18, 2022) – To address the misinformation and provide residents with the facts, the city council issued the following statement regarding remarks by Mayor Khalid this morning.

Appearing as a whistleblower

All assertions made by the mayor as a so-called whistleblower already were under investigation. All findings will be subject to the open records act when those investigations are complete. In addition, city code requires elected officials – when not designated as an official spokesperson but seeking to exercise their First Amendment rights regarding city related policy or position – to ensure the public knows that such assertions are their own opinions and are not official policy. This would apply to any conclusions reached regarding the results or outcome of any investigation.

Police corruption

There is no evidence of any corruption within the police department. As more officers voiced concern about a particular supervisor, the city manager asked the Smyrna Police Department to investigate the claims as an outside, independent entity. The police chief agreed to this process and council members were aware of the investigation, which eventually found evidence of inappropriate behavior that violated department policy. The supervisor in question resigned in lieu of termination and the process of notifying the Peace Officers Standards and Training Council was followed, contrary to the mayor's allegation that it wasn't.

Bullying

A complaint by a city employee at the director's level that a council member and the police chief tried to intimidate her and influence her actions in the police investigation is itself under investigation. As such, the city cannot comment on this situation beyond saying that it will be looked at thoroughly and any appropriate action, if necessary, will be taken. The mayor's premature release of documents related to this matter is troublesome and has the potential to taint or adversely affect the independent investigation and its outcome.

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City overcharging for public records

State law sets forth a standardize process for requesting and providing public records – including varying time frames – and standards regarding what fees can be charged. Governments can recoup resources costs, including employee time, related to the provision of these records. The size and scope of the requests greatly determine the final cost. Qualified personnel must read through each record and, where appropriate, redact private information that is exempt from disclosure according to state law. For larger requests, this can take a considerable amount of time. Charges must be based on the cost of the lowest-possible employee grade that can complete the task. In one case, a resident filed a complaint with the Georgia Attorney General's Office, alleging the city was charging too much and taking too long to answer his request. The attorney general sent notice of the complaint, not to assess guilt, but simply to allow the city to answer. The city attorney will meet the deadline for that response.

Mayor firing the city attorney

Although the mayor has alleged that he has good cause to fire the city attorney, the mayor has absolutely no power to fire a city employee under the city charter, including the city attorney. The council – with a supermajority vote – can terminate the employment of the city manager, the city clerk and the city attorney. Only the city manager can terminate or approve the termination of a member of city staff. The city council maintains its support and confidence in the City attorney who remains employed and on the job.

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